

Serial No.: 09/986,271

REMARKS

Claims 20-24, as amended, are pending. Non-elected claims 8-13 and 17-19 have been canceled to advance prosecution.

Claims 21-24 have been indicated to contain allowable subject matter.

1. Claims 20, 22, and 24 have been amended to adopt all save one of the Examiner's suggested claim language; the comma in the second-to-last-line of claim 24 has been retained. Applicants believe deleting the comma changes the meaning of the claim. According to the present invention, the annular wall, the base, and the boss are molded simultaneously. Removing the comma suggests that only the base and the boss are molded simultaneously. Applicants respectfully request that the Examiner reconsider his objection to the placement of the comma in claim 24 in light of this explanation.

2. Claim 20 was rejected under §102 as anticipated by Starnes Jr. '324 or Thomas '203.

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Independent claim 20 has been amended to clarify the arrangement of the spacers shown in Figs. 27a-c. It had been noted previously that, in this embodiment, eight spacers are provided. Four of the spacers are spacers 23a and four of the spacers are 23b. The spacers are non-annular in shape. Claim 20 has been revised to specify that $n-2$ of the spacers have two side surfaces that are perpendicular to the annular plates and parallel to each other. In the embodiment of Figs. 27a-c, $n=8$ and $n-2=6$. The six spacers with parallel side surfaces are the spacers 23a and the two spacers 23b in the upper right and lower left corners.

Thus, claim 20 now clarifies the transverse arrangement of the spacers. Neither Starnes Jr. '324 nor Thomas '203 disclose or suggest the spacer arrangement defined in amended claim 20. Accordingly, reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection of amended claim 20 under §102 are requested. As such, all pending claims are allowable.

Should the Examiner deem that any further amendments would be desirable in placing this application in even better condition for issue, he is invited to telephone applicant's undersigned representative.

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Allowance of claims 20-24 is courteously solicited.

Respectfully submitted,

PARKHURST & WENDEL, L.L.P.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Charles A. Wendel', is written over a horizontal line.

Charles A. Wendel

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May 21, 2004

Date

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